

On Heels of New Unemployment Numbers, Populist Caucus Endorses Buy American Improvement Act

Will eliminate loopholes, ensure American tax dollars are creating American jobs

Washington, DC — In light of today's announcement of stagnating unemployment numbers, the Populist Caucus announced today it is endorsing Rep. Daniel Lipinski's (IL-03) Buy American Improvement Act, H.R. 4351, to eliminate loopholes in existing domestic sourcing laws and ensure that taxpayer money is used to purchase American-made products and support American jobs whenever possible.

Ten members of the Populist Caucus are original cosponsors of the legislation, including Chairman Bruce Braley (IA-01), Vice Chair Betty Sutton (OH-13) and Vice Chair Peter DeFazio (OR-04).

"As today's jobs numbers show, America's Main Street families are still struggling," Braley said. "The outsourcing of American jobs is a clear factor in continued unemployment. It only makes sense to strengthen Buy America provisions to further ensure that the jobs created as a result of federal legislation stay within the United States. We have an obligation to create jobs in America and this legislation is essential to creating and retaining good-paying jobs for our middle class families."

"The American people expect that taxpayer dollars for jobs will be used to create jobs for the American people," Sutton said. "That is why we must have strong Buy America laws. At a time when unemployment is at 10 percent in this country, it is critical now more than ever that we stand with American workers and businesses. As we invest in our nation's infrastructure and manufacturing, the American taxpayers expect that the projects and products made will be produced in America by American workers."

"The major reason the unemployment rate continues to hover at 10 percent, despite continuing job losses, is because, sadly, people are giving up on their job searches," DeFazio said. "It is clear that we more concrete actions to address this problem. Critical investment in our nation's crumbling infrastructure will create family wage jobs that cannot be exported. But, in order to reach the full potential this investment can have on our economy, we must have stronger Buy America

provisions. It is time to rebuild the American middle class and this legislation is a critical step in the right direction.”

“Today’s endorsement is a boost for American workers and taxpayers, especially in light of continued job losses,” Congressman Lipinski said. “We cannot afford to needlessly allow taxpayer dollars to wind up in the pockets of workers in foreign countries when that money could be helping to create and support desperately needed jobs here at home. I’m looking forward to working with Representatives Braley, Sutton, and DeFazio, and all my colleagues in the Populist Caucus, to move this bill forward.”

Buying American-made goods and products is one of the best and most cost-effective ways to create jobs, and this legislation will make sure that taxpayer dollars go back to American workers and companies. Specifically, it will:

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Require that requests to waive the Buy America Act be posted online with time for public comment, giving American businesses a fighting chance to receive Federal contracts.
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Require that the government publicly justify any waivers it grants.
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Require annual reports on the use of waiver provisions.
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Define “American-made” as at least 75 percent American-made.
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Define “unreasonable cost” as raising total project cost by more than 25%.
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Prohibit agencies from segmenting projects to avoid the Buy America Act.
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Eliminate automatic waivers
for procuring goods that are used abroad.

- Establish that the
creation of American jobs is always in the public
interest.

These changes do not violate
any of America's existing trade obligations. It will simply ensure that when it
comes to "Buy America," the letter of the law doesn't undermine its
spirit.

Braley, Sutton, DeFazio and
Lipinski played a critical role in ensuring the Jobs for Main Street Act, which
passed the House in December, included strong Buy America language. The language
requires that American-made materials be used for construction, alteration,
maintenance or repair of transportation and infrastructure projects funded in
the bill.